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E.O. 12958: DECL: AFTER KOREAN REUNIFICATION  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)  
SUBJECT: DPRK DELAYS NORTH-SOUTH TALKS, ROKG OFFICIALS  
OPTIMISTIC FOR RESUMPTION IN APRIL

REF: SEOUL 731

Classified By: POL M/C JOSEPH Y. YUN. REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) The Korea Central News Agency (KCNA), the DPRK's official mouthpiece, reported on March 11 that North Korea notified South Korea by telegraph that it would delay the March 28-31 inter-Korean ministerial to "an appropriate date in April" to protest the March 10 announcement of the annual RSOI-Foal Eagle joint military exercise between the United States and the ROK. The KCNA report highlighted expressions of regret from Kwon Ho Ung, the DPRK's head of delegation to the North-South talks, that the ROK did not heed Pyongyang's repeated calls to stop joint exercises with "outside forces."

(NOTE: As reported ref A, the DPRK recently conveyed this point during the March 2-3 inter-Korean general officer-level military talks. END NOTE.) The North stressed that Seoul's continued participation in exercises with the United States ran counter to the spirit of the June 15 North-South Joint Declaration. The ROK's Ministry of Unification subsequently released an official statement regretting the DPRK's unilateral decision to delay the scheduled talks.

¶2. (C) Despite the apparent setback, South Korean officials were optimistic that the talks would resume in April. Director Kim Hyung Suk of MOU's Policy Agenda Management Team told poloff on March 13 that the tone of the message was more respectful than in the past and that the DPRK delivered the message weeks in advance, rather than on the day of the scheduled talks. The reference to a specific point in time was also a departure from the previous five instances when Pyongyang had unilaterally stalled the talks with vague indications that it would resume "when the ROK no longer displayed hostilities." Recalling that the DPRK had counter-proposed late March for scheduling the talks in response to the ROK's proposal for mid-March during the previous ministerial in December, Kim opined that the DPRK had, in essence, demonstrated that it would continue inter-Korean dialogue regardless of U.S.-ROK exercises since it obviously knew the exercises would be announced then.

¶3. (C) Kim Sungbae, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Unification, likewise told POL M/C on March 14 that Pyongyang would probably return to the talks sometime in April. He seconded Kim Hyung Suk's analysis that Pyongyang's message was softer and more specific than in the past and opined that DPRK officials in charge of inter-Korean affairs likely felt

pressured to alter the date of the talks given that the original dates were too close to the dates of the exercises. Given the DPRK's "military-first policy" and the central role played by the National Defense Commission, it was unrealistic to expect those officials to be able to persuade the military.

VERSHBOW